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AUTHOR Coleman, Peter
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ABSTRACT

Power, or influence, in educational governance is increasingly becoming diffused. Everyone in education now feels relatively powerless. A political model of decision-making, emphasizing consultation with representatives of interest groups is now appropriate. In this model, the school board functions as "meta-mediator." This modifies the role of senior administrators. The pluralistic power structure, characterized by interest group politics, is now the most common kind. In such systems activist educators are likely to cause and encounter conflict. The skillful exercise of influence in coping with conflict in pluralistic environments is a vital skill for senior administrators. Conflict occurs when groups perceive a divergence of interests, as opposed to a commonality of interests. The chances of peaceful adjustment are maximized when a degree of shared interests exists and when some other conditions, including the existence of institutional arrangements for negotiation, are met. Conflict between the organization and clients is increasingly common and can be extremely difficult to deal with. Two common strategies, attitude change and power, can be used alternately. Conflict management is increasingly a common activity and an essential skill of senior administrators. Training or experience in it is thus an increasingly important qualification for leadership roles. (Author/IRT)

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THE INCREASED PLURALISM AND POLITICIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION - COPING WITH CONFLICT

Peter Coleman
Superintendent
St. Boniface School Division
St. Boniface, Manitoba

A paper presented at

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ABSTRACT

Power, or influence, in educational governance is increasingly becoming diffused. Everyone in education now feels relatively powerless. A political model of decision-making, emphasizing consultation with representatives of interest groups, is now appropriate. In this model, the school board functions as "Meta-Mediator". This modifies the role of the senior administrators.

Recent studies have identified a typology of power structures; dominated, factional, pluralistic and inert structures exist, but pluralistic, characterized by interest group politics, are most common. In such systems activist educators are likely to cause and encounter conflict in their corner with organizational improvement.

The skillful exercise of influence in coping with conflict in pluralistic environments is a vital skill for senior administrators. Conflict, as opposed to co-operation occurs when groups perceive a divergence of interests, as opposed to commonality of interests. The chances of peaceful adjustment are maximized when a degree of shared interests exists, and when some other conditions are met, including the existence of institutional arrangements for negotiation.

External conflicts, between the organization and clients, are increasingly common and can be extremely difficult to deal with. Two common strategies, attitude change and power, can be used alternately. Generally, attitude change strategies are tried first in educational conflicts, in the hope of arriving at compromise solutions, and only when these fail will power strategies be undertaken. Internal conflicts are more eaily dealt with, because of additional resources available to the administrator. Once again, it is desirable to avoid power strategies.

Conflict management is increasingly a common activity and essential skill of senior administrators. Training or experience in it is thus an increasingly important qualification for leadership roles.

THE INCREASED PLURALISM AND POLITICIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION - COPING WITH CONFLICT

Peter Coleman
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I am going to talk about educational decision-making in political contexts, and in particular, decision-making in conflict situations. My viewpoint is that of participant observer, and generally, the sources of what I will say are my own experience and reported social science thought and research. Much of the reported research seems to me to fail the test of experience, that is, does not seem relevant or helpful in understanding decision-making in which I have participated, or which I have observed. The generalizations presented here about decision-making I believe pass two tests: they are consistent with the findings of social scientists, and they are validated by my own experience.

First, I would like to establish a general context by examining the general distribution of power in educational governance at present, and the effect this has on decision-making. Then I will deal more specifically with community power structures in school districts, with the roles of two key actors in educational decision-making, trustee and superintendent, and the impact of community power structures on the ways in which these roles are carried out. Finally, I will provide what seems to me to be a useful and relevant perspective for a senior administrator involved in educational decision-making in a variety of common situations involving conflict.

POWER DIFFUSION AND EDUCATIONAL DECISION-MAKING

I have argued elsewhere that educators are becoming increasingly sensitive about power and its possession, and that we are seeing currently a redistribution of power in which teachers and citizens (and perhaps students) are net gainers, and administrators and trustees are losers. However, use of the term power is misleading in discussions of education governance since power is rarely decisive. Influence is a more useful term. Decisions are effectively consensual decisions, since school systems are now characterized by what I would call influence diffusion. (See Coleman, 1975, in press, for detailed discussion.)

Another way of describing this trend is to examine public value orientations. According to Williams, (1973) governmental institutions generally are affected by three basic value positions and shifts in emphasis between them. The positions are representativeness, technical competence, and executive leadership. Currently, strong executive leadership by an individual is not welcome in our decision-making contexts. Similarly technical competence is at a low ebb. The predominant value is representativeness or participation. Decisions in education are very frequently questioned nowadays not because they are wrong but because some groups with an interest in the issue were not consulted.

There are three important consequences of this diffusion of influence:

1. Senior administrators increasingly feel powerless: "administrative powerlessness is becoming one of the most pervasive realities of organizational life" (Erickson, 1972).
2. As diffusion occurs, there is increased frustration since everyone feels powerless. This was the conclusion of two researchers for a Commission on Educational Governance which recently completed a nation-wide examination of citizen opinion on "Who Controls the Schools?" in the United States (Weinstein and Mitchell, 1975, p.2).

3. As influence becomes more diffused both conflict and consultative modes of operation become increasingly important features of educational decision-making.

There is by no means unanimous agreement about administrator powerlessness. One examination of the governance issue sees the reduction of administrator power as a major requirement for improved governance, and yet to be accomplished:

"The third part of governance we address derives from the enormous resources lodged in the superintendent's office and the widespread tendency to label educational issues as technical and professional rather than political questions. Thus the third component consists of the ability of the public's representatives to confront the superintendent's office, the social and political elements about the district which encourage confrontation, and the characteristics of board members and superintendents which are important in this regard" (Zeigler and Jennings, 1974, p. xv).

It is difficult to reconcile this research finding with the perceptions of others, until one notes that Zeigler's data were gathered in 1968 (p. 15),and identifies his initial bias:"the superintendent and the board are engaged in a contest for influence" (p.19). Only in the 1970's do we find perceptions of administrator powerlessness - the trend is of recent origin.

In general, this relative powerlessness, resulting from influence diffusion, enforces a different kind of decision-making. The rational decision-making model, in which a series of alternatives is examined by a wise and far-sighted administrator, who selects the "best" in relation to overall goals, is I believe now only relevant to a small range of unimportant decisions.

On most serious issues there are at least two alternative points of view requiring two different courses of action, and based on different value positions. Consultation in such instances invariably requires coping with conflict, and I would like to suggest a decision-making model, which can be called either a political model or a conflict model, relevant to these situations, and based on Corwin's view of the nature of organizations.

Corwin defines an organization as consisting of 1. stable patterns of interaction, between 2. coalitions of groups having a collective identity, and 3. pursuing interests and accomplishing tasks, and 4. co-ordinated through a system of authority. (See Parsons, 1963, pp. 244-248 for a full theoretical statement.)

This decision-making model emphasizes six things about some decisions in educational administration:

1. They are characterized by compromise and consensus based on the representation of different points of view by different interest groups, who are seen as having the right of consultation.
2. The decision-making process is routinized in the committee whose members represent different interest groups, which is so common a feature of our lives as administrators now as to be virtually invisible.
3. There is an expectation that each group represented will provide some value positions, as their contribution to the decision-making process. This is expected to legitimize the decisions made in the eyes of organizational members and clients.
4. The decision made will usually be a compromise between different preferences, rather than the best decision in the technical sense. However, this model can be considered to include the rational-technical model generally used by decision theorists, since different interest groups provide different alternatives, and often the "best" (in some sense) alternative will be chosen.

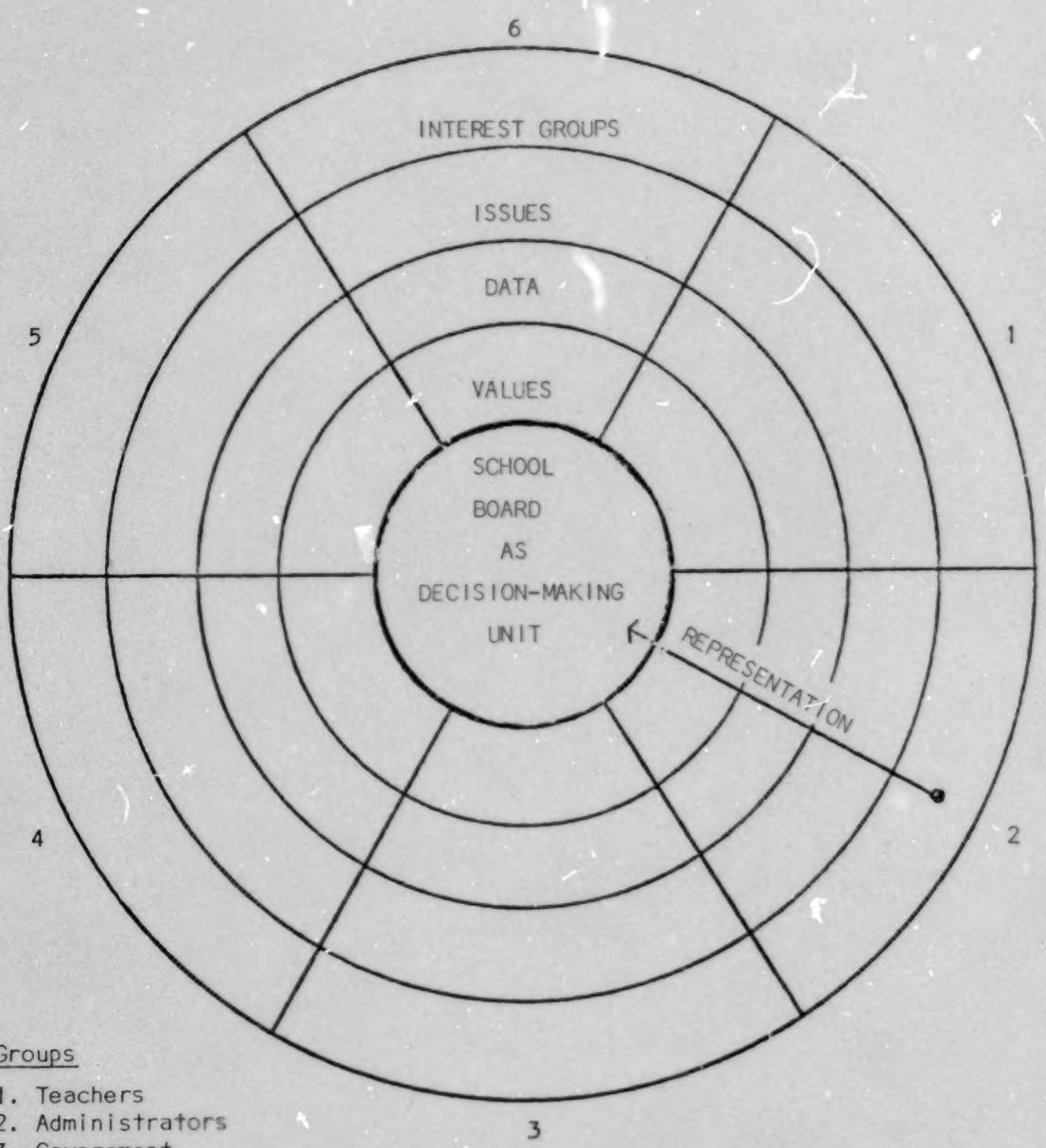
5. This model then significantly limits the importance of technical competence, and thus of professional control of decision-making.
6. It should be emphasized that the model is intended to suggest that each interest group sees different issues as vital, different data as relevant, and different values as important. For example, teachers would be more concerned with career expectations, working conditions, and job assignments and would see such data as the important things about a new school. Parents on the other hand would regard school discipline, transportation, lunch hours, the quality of the teachers, and the type of instructional programs as the important issues, with data on these issues being relevant.

The model is portrayed in the chart which follows. The Board receives position statements from a variety of sources, and may feel obliged to make compromise decisions. This perception of the Board's operations is identical with Lutz's view of the school board as "meta-mediator":

> "A meta-mediator is a decision-making system that processes all competing demands, organizes, reorganizes, modifies, generalizes, illuminates and emphasizes and in general reshapes these demands into an operational decision involving, usually, the distribution of limited resources" (Lutz, 1975, p.1).

This certainly has wide acceptance as the fundamental task of school boards (cf. the notion of responsiveness in Zeigler and Jennings, 1974, pp. 77-94). Unfortunately, empirical studies have demonstrated that much of school board decision-making is administrative, and not political: in one study, only 16 of 187 decisions were policy decisions (Campbell, 1970, p.189).

SCHOOL DISTRICT DECISION-MAKING - A POLITICAL MODEL



Groups

1. Teachers
2. Administrators
3. Government
4. Students
5. Parents
6. Taxpayers

If the political model of decision-making becomes the norm, there will be significant effects on the traditional roles of trustees and administrators in decision-making. The trustee will increasingly derive legitimacy from the institutional machinery of election, which ensures representativeness, and from commitment to "the effective transmittal of informed public expectation" (Pitman, 1972, p.9). The distinguishing characteristics of the trustee will be first, a clear notion of community wishes and commitment to a continuous process of reading public opinion; and second the ability to ensure that the wishes of the community are part of the complex of forces that produce educational decisions.

The role of the senior administrator in board decision-making is generally described as that of "professional adviser". The administrator provides information on which the Board bases its decisions, and then implements the decisions. However, this is clearly an inadequate description of the complex relationship between administrator and board members. In general, senior administrators in education, as in public administration generally (see Mainzer, 1973, p.70), now participate quite extensively in decision-making on policy issues. Procedure varies, but in some districts there are essentially two levels of decision-making, the school level and the board level, with senior administrators participating at the board level. This participation may sometimes take the form of the "policy researcher" role (Coleman, 1974), and/or the role of mediator between interest groups, on behalf of the Board, or most commonly, that of advocate of a particular solution or decision.

Whatever form the participation takes, the administrator will increasingly find himself dealing with value questions. The political model emphasizes these, and in any event educational decision-making is value-laden. Since the degree of technical expertise and specialized knowledge in education administration is not high, value concerns are more critical than in other

areas of public administration. Furthermore, "public administration in a constitutional democracy is destinguished from private administration by greater value complexity" (Mainzer, 1973: p. 17). One illustration of this trend is the current interest in identifying goals, i.e. the value bases of policy decisions. The participation of professional administrators in this is essential but touchy, since values are the particular concern of the trustee (see Coleman, 1974). Another illustration is the current concern with opinion surveys of various types.

This consideration of decision-making and roles has concerned itself with new trends and probable developments. Empirical studies of educational governance and the distribution of power in communities demonstrate that the situation has been quite different, in the recent past.

COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURES AND THE EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

The analysis of community power structures has some history. Early "reputational" studies (e.g. Hunter, 1953) were criticized on the grounds that they assumed that "decision-makers are likely to remain the same from issue to issue" (Polsby, 1963), and because of "respondents' confusion of status and power" (Wolfinger, 1960). Contemporary studies are likely to supplement reputational techniques with decision analysis techniques (e.g. Dahl, 1961) to avoid such problems.

A further problem with such studies has been a tendency to over-generalize the findings, to suggest that the community studied is typical. Recent studies tend to find a typology of structures, within which actual community power arrangements fit more or less well (e.g. McCarty and Ramsey, 1971; Nunnery and Kimbrough, 1971). The two studies cited arrived at very similar conclusions, each identifying four common alternative structures in educational governance, and hence are mutually supportive.

In the chart which follows, the McCarty and Ramsey formulation is used. Perhaps the main weakness of their description is a tendency to see the structures as relatively permanent. In fact, it seems probable that changes from one type to another occur relatively often. The Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) model, although similar, provides for change in suggesting:

1. The notion of a cycle of policy-making in which longer periods of policy stability are disrupted by periods of relatively abrupt policy change;
2. The discovery that two pivotal events reveal this policy change cycle in action, namely:
   a) the replacement of the chief executive in a district, and
   b) the defeat of an incumbent school board member at the polls.

COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATION

Based on McCarty and Ramsey, The School Managers: Power and Conflict in American Public Education, 1971.

COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURE	SCHOOL BOARD	SUPERINTENDENT
DOMINATED A special group exercises power over policies of the Board, and the role of the Superintendent. Conflict or controversy is controlled or eliminated by influential people.	DOMINATED Board elections are not contested, sometimes through control of nominations. Trustees are members of the dominant group, or refer decisions to a dominant group or individual. Decision-making is consensual, and private, with frequent reference to outside influentials.	FUNCTIONARY The Superintendent implements policy, without participating in its development, maintains the organization, and copes with problems. Superintendent is unlikely to initiate any change, or be seen as influential. He/she would never oppose the Board on any issue. He/she gives the impression of being cautious, procrastinating, and indecisive.
FACTIONAL Two opposing groups exercise power on many issues, including Board elections and policies. These factions may be based on political, religious, linguistic, or cultural allegiances, and are relatively permanent.	FACTIONAL Board elections are contested strongly with shifting majorities on the Board. Trustees are representatives of factions, and react accordingly on most issues. Majority decisions, contested by minority representatives, are normal. Board activities are public and conflict-ridden. There is very rarely a consensual decision, even on major issues. Personal antagonisms are common.	POLITICAL STRATEGIST The Superintendent is always conscious of the factions on the Board, but tries to avoid becoming identified with one faction. He may seek public support personally for protection. Since every decision is opposed by some trustees, the Superintendent is always subject to criticism and hostility. Often, the Superintendent refrains from making any commitments, or expressing any opinions publicly.

COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURE	SCHOOL BOARD	SUPERINTENDENT
PLURALISTIC	STATUS-CONGRUENT	PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR
A variety of groups have influence, but none has decisive power. On different issues groups combine or oppose each other, and may produce candidates for the Board elections.	Trustees must pay constant attention to issues and community feeling. There are no feuds. Debate influences voting on issues, delegations are frequent, and trustees articulate positions on issues. Their status and longevity are influenced by these positions. The Board attempts to reach consensus on compromise positions.	The Superintendent concentrates on long-term organizational improvement. He is goal-oriented, and eager for useful change. By demonstrating rationality, integrity and reliability he/she acquires the necessary support to improve the organization. By co-operative decision-making, he/she retains it. The Superintendent participates actively in Board policy-making, but without seeking undue influence.
INERT	SANCTIONING	DECISION-MAKER
No community influence or interest in Board activities, or in educational issues generally.	The Board requires and accepts professional leadership. Recommendations are rarely seriously questioned, and almost never rejected. No community consultation seems to take place. Meetings are short, effectively private, votes are unanimous, and election contests rare. Controversial issues are rarely debated.	The Superintendent feels little hesitation in making a wide variety of decisions, and assumes that his recommendations are going to be accepted. He feels no necessity to consult with the community, or anyone else. Candidates for the Board are often solicited and/or informally endorsed by the Superintendent. He is perceived by members of the community and the Board as the real decision-maker but without uneasiness and hostility.

Any cross-sectional, as opposed to longitudinal, study is likely to exaggerate permanence. However, if Williams is correct in seeing the dominance of the participation value, and if influence diffusion is an associated and important trend, one would expect dominated and inert power structures to become less and less common. They are of course associated with lack of general interest in the community about educational issues. The rising costs of education, the wide audience gained by the critics of public education, and continuing urbanization all make probable more and more community concern. Factional and pluralistic structures are likely to become the norm. McCarty and Ramsey do not specify a frequency distribution, but even though they were seeking samples of all four types in the Northeast and the Midwest, their final sample contained 23 pluralistic communities in a total of 51 (1971, p. 244).

The typology may also exaggerate the degree of subordination of position holders; for example, McCarty and Ramsey maintain that "if a superintendent's style of performance does not adjust to the community power structure . . . if necessary he will be summarily dismissed" (1971, p.64). I would argue that there are other possibilities, including changes in power structure, and that individual superintendents and school board members are not powerless to bring these about. Thus I am arguing for an interactive rather than a conformist model, in which there are at least two important variables: the role expectations and the basic assumptions of individual trustees and superintendents.

In the previous section, the effects of the political model of decision-making on the roles of trustees and administrators have been described. The trustee who sees his role as mediator will fit very badly into dominated or inert power structures, as will the administrator who sees it as part of his duty to ensure that the schools become and remain responsive to the wishes of the community.

With regard to the basic assumptions of educators, a simple distinction, between activists and preservers, is very useful. Activists seem driven by consciousness of the gap between an ideal educational system and the real system in which they work. They believe they can change things, they are prepared to take risks, and they do not expect to remain in their present positions until retirement. The preservers, on the other hand, believe that their present system is as good as can be expected, that it is threatened by forces which they must thwart, and that their job is system maintenance. The activist takes the initiative: he raises issues, makes demands on people for performance, emphasizes evaluation and accountability, and generally stirs things up. The preserver, because he assumes that the system can only get worse, reacts to issues, is reluctant to make demands on staff, resists evaluation and accountability, and generally tries to keep things quiet.

Carlson (1972) makes a similar but empirical distinction between types of superintendents. Carlson's first type, place-bound superintendents, values work in a particular community over position; however, "the career-bound superintendent places greater value on a career as superintendent than on life in a specific community" (1972, p. 42). Carlson shows that place-bound superintendents are less likely to adopt innovations, to develop new rules, to hire additional administrators for central office, or to engage in conflict. The career-bound superintendent sees conflict as inevitable and himself as expendable. As one career-bound superintendent puts it describing a specific situation, "I knew this was a tough job. It looked to me as if the school board and the system would have to go through one more superintendent before the several communities would learn to work together. I told the board this" (Carlson, 1972, p. 139).

Activist educators and trustees, with the role conceptions already suggested, seem likely to encourage and assist in the move to more pluralistic structures, which may already be the norm. Within such structures, coping with conflict is the most important activity of the educational administrator.

COPING WITH CONFLICT

I believe school administrators often regard conflict as unusual and undesirable. However, neither characterization is accurate. Because an organization is "an arrangement of interdependent parts, each having a special function with respect to the whole" (Cartwright, 1965, p.1) the relationship between parts always involves some conflict. "Conflict theory stresses the tension inherent in the very fact of differentiation" (Corwin, 1970, p.22). Thus conflict should be seen as normal in organizations; in many ways, it is also desirable. For example, consider the significance of grievances:

> "Grievances may be perceived in a more useful and constructive way, as part of the normal psychology of organizations. We can draw upon a cybernetic framework and see grievances as constituting a feedback loop in a personnel administration system . . . Since a feedback loop is a normal and necessary part of a system and a vital control to govern the functioning of the system, grievances can then be seen as normal and even necessary. Grievances test the effectiveness of a system" (Lutz, Kleinman and Evans, 1967, p. vii).

Some administrators may view conflict as undesirable because it is unpleasant for individuals. Even this view is somewhat inaccurate. For some people conflict is in fact pleasant, although these people are not usually bureaucrats: "Open conflict can turn out to be irresistibly attractive to participants. They may enjoy it wholeheartedly even while they feel guilty over their enjoyment" (Hall, 1967, p.1). We call such people "troublemakers". However, it is a fact of life which should not be overlooked in coping with conflicts.

If conflict is neither unusual nor undesirable, and will be made more common by the developing pluralistic power structures, and by influence diffusion, with which administrators increasingly must deal, then learning to

"manage" conflict is an essential new skill for the senior administrator. The ways in which such administrators must cope with conflict are increasingly political ways. Since the simple exercise of coercive power is no longer possible, "one suspects that ever more frequently issues will be resolved by bargaining and politics (both being forms of compromise) rather than by domination" (Nunnery, 1975, p.5). Thus the administrator must learn to wield influence rather than power, and the vital question about educational leadership is "Can the modern strategies of persuasion, involvement, participation, and interaction with external systems and influentials be widely used by educational leaders" (Friesen, 1975, p.4)?

I would argue further that since change inevitably creates conflict, the administrator himself, if he is an activist, must be ready to create new conflicts and cope with these. The alternative yields the initiative to other groups:

> "In many areas of educational policy decision, the union or teacher association has almost completely seized the initiative. It is at this level that the fight for educational leadership exists. It matters not so much whether teachers participate in policy and goal setting; it matters a great deal if the initiative is consistently and solely theirs and never with the board or the administration"(Lutz, 1967, p.86).

Thus for the activist educator, in particular, the development of conflict management skills is crucial. Failure to manage conflict well is probably the most common cause of administrator dismissal, especially for activists.

Educational administrators are likely to encounter a variety of kinds of conflicts arising from a variety of sources. A useful categorization focusses on the organization, and in this case the school district. There is internal conflict, between members of the organization, and external conflict, between the organization and its clients or other organizations.

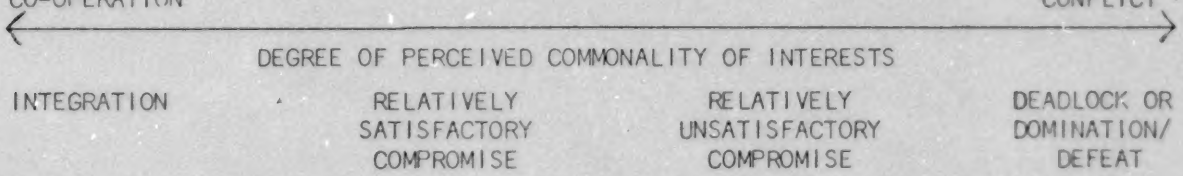
Conflict can concern organizational goals, methods or processes, or outcomes.

The discussion of conflict provided here will be relatively broad, and will attempt to clarify the general nature of conflict, in a way which suggests how to cope with conflicts of various kinds. I propose to treat conflict and co-operation as the two extremes on an interaction continuum describing one facet of group activity.

The content of the continuum is perceived interests: "Just as the sources of co-operation are found in actual or perceived commonality of interests, the sources of conflict are found in some degree of actual or perceived divergence of interest" (Gross, 1964, p. 271).

There are a variety of possible conflict outcomes: "These may take the form of avoidance, deadlock, domination-defeat, compromise, and integration. Any actual outcome of conflict resolution is usually a combination of two or more of these outcome forms" (Gross, 1964, p. 274). Another viewpoint suggests that there are only three possible outcomes: coercion, peaceful adjustment, and deadlock (Dahl, 1963, p.73).

These points can be summarized in a simple diagram.



We can now examine the possible outcomes in more detail, and the conditions in an organization which maximize the probability of peaceful adjustments of conflict.

Avoidance or deadlock as an outcome is common, and sometimes desirable. Avoidance is a common technique, with major benefits. We all know of conflicts in education which all parties concerned have avoided because of the potential for great damage. For example, the issue of the working hours of teachers has

been avoided throughout Canada, to this point. Deadlock is common in situations "where power is widely dispersed among many individual groups, when every solution is a compromise that is objectionable to many, and when every settlement itself creates new problems" (Gross, 1953, p.26). But deadlock is only possible when the interdependence of the parties to the conflict is so low that resolution is not essential (Dahl, 1963, p.73), or when the issue is of low importance to both, compared to other issues which can be resolved.

Victory or defeat is a rare outcome in internal conflicts, because of the impact in the long run. It is more common in external conflicts, but even here is avoided as much as possible because of the ill-will created. Thus administrators and boards will go to great lengths to placate even small dissident minorities, in such issues as family life education, for example.

Perhaps the most important thing about compromise solutions in organizational conflict is that they are so frequently satisfactory where the fundamental interests being protected have been clearly defined, and areas of agreement can be seen. "The larger the area of agreement among different actors on what would constitute a desirable solution, the better the chances for a peaceful adjustment" (Dahl, 1963, p. 77). The most serious problem in arriving at compromises is often preventing parties from adopting frozen positions. The inability to be flexible with these positions of course shifts the conflict from a bargaining game to a zero sum game, to use the terms common in game theory. In the zero sum game, there is only one winner, and the outcome is not compromise, but domination/defeat.

Integration is a very special and interesting kind of conflict outcome in which the interests of all parties are satisfied without any losses being involved. It is achieved by a very precise analysis of desired and unacceptable outcomes, and is an ideal form of conflict resolution.

Because integrative solutions require a very high degree of creative thought, they are rarely found in practice. Certainly in disputes involving measurable commodities, money power, voting strength, and so on, such a resolution is not possible.

Conditions affecting the likelihood of peaceful adjustment have been identified (Dahl, 1963, pp.77-87):

1. "The likelihood of peaceful adjustment to a conflict is increased if there exist institutional arrangements that encourage consultation, negotiation, the exploration of alternatives, and the search for mutually beneficial solutions ".
2. "The more that conflicts are cumulative, the less likely is peaceful adjustment".
3. Resource shortages reduce the likelihood of peaceful adjustment, because compromises cannot be bought.
4. The extent to which peaceful adjustment has been successful in the past will help to determine its usefulness in a current conflict.
5. "The closer the parties to a conflict approach equality in potential coercive power, as they perceive their situation , the greater the likelihood of peaceful adjustment".
6. "The likelihood of peaceful adjustment depends on the personality characteristics of the individuals who influence the decisions of the various parties to a conflict".

Based on this list of conditions, good conflict management could certainly include attempting to build in appropriate conditions for peaceful adjustment . These would include extensive arrangements for consultation and negotiation, such as the board-teacher liaison committees which have become popular, or parent committees which provide useful reference points in the event of a conflict.

A brief case history from our district may be useful at this point. We had a large French elementary school, K - 8, enrolling 800 students, although built for 500. We had built several miles south in a rapidly developing subdivision a new school, designated as a French school, capable of accommodating 450 students. We wished to move some of the 800 to the new school to alleviate the overcrowding. There was wide-spread agreement amongst parents that this alleviation was necessary but no agreement on who should go, by bus, to the other school. We asked the parent committee of the French school to examine the problem and propose a solution.

The parent committee examined a number of solutions, including two major ones, the first one favoured by the administration of the district. A number of students were already being transported to the existing French school. The simple solution was to transport those students to the new school. The second alternative, devised by the parent committee, was to split the schools by grade level, on the grounds that larger age groupings and hence more easily teachable groups could thus be developed. The parent committee proposed a split in which the existing school enrolled K - 5 students, and the new one enrolled grades 6 - 9, plus local K children.

A great deal of discussion was carried on in the community with a final general meeting which was very well attended. A clear majority favoured the grade level splitting even though this meant that many students were transported.

This little case history illustrates some elements of the conflict model, and the conditions making for peaceful resolution. First, the general shared interests in alleviating overcrowding, and providing a second French school modeled on the first, were very dominant, to the extent that the Board had already appointed the highly respected principal of the first school to the new school, to make placement at the new school more acceptable to parents. Additionally, neither party was locked into an inflexible position: the two

main alternatives were genuinely exploratory, and hence no one had a victory/defeat stake in them.

With regard to the conditions for peaceful resolution, virtually all were met. The parent committee was established and had engaged in consultations with the Board previously (1). Although the Board had been in conflict with other parent groups over two school closures, that conflict was not regarded as relevant, so that there was no cumulative effect (2). Money was available to provide the additional transportation required by the parent committee's favoured alternative (3). Previous minor conflicts within the parent committee, and between the committee and the school and division administration had been peacefully resolved (4). Although the Board clearly had coercive power available, its experiences with school closures had been so painful and traumatic, including boycotts, threatened intervention by provincial and even federal authorities, and trustee electoral defeat, that both parties were aware that the use of coercive power was unlikely (5). The school principal concerned, the leaders of the parent committee, and Board members were all relatively expert negotiators, with a high degree of commitment to rational problem-solving (6).

This little case history illustrates one of the commonest kinds of external conflict, for school administrators, that between the administration of a school district and a group of clients. Since this is threatening as well as common, I will give another illustration , in which further social science insights will be brought to bear, in a case history involving the closure of two small elementary schools (one French and one English).

Walton (1965) suggests that in intergroup conflicts there are two alternative strategies, the power strategy and the attitude change strategy. These can be used sequentially or alternately. In educational contexts, it is likely that attitude change strategies, aimed at compromise outcomes, will be used first with recourse to power strategies after. In the attitude change

strategy, the following elements are likely:

1. minimizing differences in goals and emphasizing co-operative strategies: "We all have the interests of the students in mind and can work together".
2. emphasizing the desirability of a mutually satisfactory outcome; "no one profits from conflicts between parents and the board".
3. refraining from harmful actions and statements; "We have not taken our case to the media".
4. emphasizing mutual dependencies; "The district must have the co-operation of the parents".
5. insuring equal status in negotiations; "We should set up a joint working committee, with equal representation".
6. attempting to understand motives and expectations; "We wish to give you every opportunity to state your position".
7. being open about intentions and rationale; "We have documented the reasons for our proposed plan".

Obviously in many instances such strategies do result in compromise decisions, which are moderately satisfactory to both parties. However, should such attempts to modify attitudes fail there may be recourse by the groups to power strategies. In our case, this was initiated by school board resolutions, noting the lack of alternatives and failure of negotiations, and announcing the decisions to close the schools, despite parent protests. Parent reaction also exemplified power strategies, characterized by the following steps:

1. attempting to assert power; "We present the following petition signed by 322 parents".
2. threats to use the demonstrated power in embarrassing ways; "We will boycott the schools".
3. questioning the goals and motivations of the other group; "What is the real reason for wishing to close the schools"?

4. increasing ambiguity and confusion about the available information; "We have gathered our own data on enrolments and ours are the correct figures".

From the point of view of the administrator involved in such conflicts, several things can be said. First, it is desirable to be able to identify the point at which bargaining breaks down, and power strategies become appropriate. The clearest indication is the extent to which positions are frozen, so that the outcomes seen as essential by the parties are mutually exclusive and non-negotiable. The only outcomes are then victory/defeat, or deadlock. Second, at this point, the administrator should not try to avoid conflict, but rather, try to minimize it and limit its duration. Third, he should get his message to the media first (rebuttals are always weak) and often; he should never refuse to speak to the media, and always challenge the other group's representations of the situation. In presenting his case, he should simplify it as much as possible, even at the expense of precision. Fourth, he must emphasize the legitimacy (elected trustees) and responsibility of his group, and the illegitimacy and irresponsibility of the other group. School boycotts, for example, while common, are very much a two-edged sword; a press release, or better, an interview on this threat can emphasize the irresponsibility of anyone advocating boycotts. Finally, note that the leader of the opposition group will very likely be elected to the Board at the next election. The wise administrator, caught up in such power strategies, had better ensure that Board members are the main protagonists, and make all or most of the public statements.

All of this is based on the premise that the power strategy must be made to seem unworkable to the other party to the conflict. A return to atittude change strategies sometimes becomes possible, if the leadership of the other group is rational and sophisticated, and becomes convinced that the power strategy will not pay off. Any offered opportunities for further negotiations must be accepted. To refuse to negotiate is always poor strategy.

Frequently, of course, there is no possibility of attitude change, and power prevails. The consequences in the short run are both personally and organizationally unpleasant. In our case they included a school boycott over a period of weeks by a small group of parents and students, the setting up of an independent school, and substantial pressure from the premier and the Secretary of State. This concerned the French school only, of course. No-one was concerned about the closure of the English school, except the parents.

Since coping with external conflicts is more difficult, and more threatening, this has been emphasized. But internal conflicts also are becoming commoner, given the increased power of teacher organizations. Generally speaking, the administrator seeking to manage internal conflicts has access to an important source of influence denied him in dealing with external conflicts.

> "Most theorists agree . . . that a major basis of influence is the possession, or control, of valued resources, provided these can be used to facilitiate or hinder the goal attainment of another agent. Econom ic resources have this property, and these have been especially stressed in analyses of power in society and economic institutions. In recent years, psychologically oriented theorists have maintained many human needs require resources, other than economic ones, which an agent may control. As a result the concept of resource is now given a very wide range of referents"(Cartwright, 1965, p. 11).

This notion of the importance of resources is of course based on an exchange view of human relationships. Some theorists believe that "exchange underlies all human interaction". In such a conception "resources are traded for changes in behaviour" (Cartwright, 1965, p. 16 citing Homans, 1958, p. 606 and Gouldner, 1960). I have described elsewhere the importance of this conception for understanding superordinate-subordinate relationships, and control mechanisms (Coleman, 1975).

Another feature of internal conflict favourable for the administrator seeking to manage it is the availability and usefulness of written rules. From the point of view of the subordinate, written rules are important in that they serve to reduce the threat inherent in power (Cartwright, 1965, p. 36) by delineating acceptable behaviour. From the point of view of the superordinate, rules are also useful in limiting internal conflicts:

> "Rules in a bureaucracy tend to structure, define, and limit the conflicts. They usually spell out how one side or the other can act in conflict situations. Thus, under rules, behaviour is more predictable and when conflict occurs it can take place within agreed-upon limits"(Lutz, 1967, p. 96).

In other respects, internal conflicts are similar to external conflicts. There is often more readiness by administrators to use power strategies, because more power is available, but this can be misleading. The power of a senior administrator can be considered a depleting resource, and its overutilization is likely both to solidify opposition and raise doubts about important management skills of the administrator. Power in resolving internal conflict should only be used when all else fails, and, most importantly, when vital organizational interests are threatened.

Perhaps the most difficult thing for an administrator to deal with in coping with conflict is the physical stress, a good deal of it deriving from very real fears regarding professional survival. But stress cannot be avoided in a senior position, and in moderate doses is not necessarily harmful, provided your health is good. Generally, power strategies produce more stress, and thus it is hardly necessary to recommend avoidance of power strategies to experienced administrators, because they see the dangers. However, trustees often get impatient and arbitrary, and an important part of the administrator's role may be to encourage trustees to adopt attitude change strategies in most conflicts, external and internal. From this point of view, the salary

negotiations required by law are an important training ground for trustees.

Coping with conflict is increasingly the most important, interesting, challenging, and rewarding aspect of the work of the senior administrator, in my view. Educational organizations are peculiarly subject to entropy (i.e. natural tendency to revert to chaos) and any aspect of the organization which attracts one's attention is likely to be improvable, and any attempt to change things to become an issue, a new source of conflict.

The increased pluralization and politicization of education, with the resulting frequency of occurrence of the political model of decision-making, will increase the amount of conflict in educational organizations, as will the current resurgence of conservative social and political views. The job of the senior administrator will increasingly resemble that of the professional negotiator, or mediator. Fortunately, the role of principal has increasingly taken on similar elements, so that this most common training-ground for senior administrators should increasingly be functional.

At the risk of seeming ungrateful to the sponsors of this conference, I cannot say as much for university preparation programs, at present. Perhaps all prospective senior administrators should be required to serve as negotiations chairman for their union local, or in some similar activity. Recently, the Board of the Winnipeg School Division, far the largest in Manitoba, appointed as Superintendent a man whose main experience in education was serving for 16 years as the negotiator for the Winnipeg Teachers' Association. His expertise, clearly, is in coping with conflict. It is an unusual route to the superintendency, but a sign of the times.

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